

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4-8, 10, 12-16, 18, and 20 are pending in this application. Claims 3, 9, 11, 17, and 19 are canceled by the present response without prejudice. Claims 1-4, 6-11, 13-17, and 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. patent 5,270,775 to Suzuki. Claims 5, 12, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Suzuki as described in claims 1, 10, and/or 15, and further in view of U.S. patent 5,543,892 to Hirata et al. (herein "Hirata").

Addressing the above-noted rejections, those rejections are traversed by the present response.

Applicants initially note that each of independent claims 1, 10, 15, 16, and 20 is amended by the present response to clarify features recited therein. Specifically, independent claim 1 incorporates the limitations of now canceled dependent claim 2, independent claim 10 incorporates the limitations of now canceled dependent claim 11, independent claims 15 and 16 incorporate the limitations of now canceled dependent claim 19, and independent claim 20 incorporates similar limitations of now canceled dependent claim 19. The above-noted features are believed to clarify the claims over the applied art.

Independent claim 1 is directed to an image forming device management system that includes both a data communication device and a center management device. As now clarified in independent claim 1, the center management device includes an "input for inputting a holiday data of the center system and/or the customer system", "calculation means for calculating an early message date...", and "early message date setting means for transmitting the early message date...to the data communication device via the telephone network...". The above-noted features are believed to distinguish over the applied art to Suzuki.

With respect to such features recited in previously pending dependent claim 2, the outstanding Office Action cites in Suzuki the keyboard in Figure 9 and the disclosure at column 9, lines 15-67 to meet the limitations of the claimed “input means”. However, applicants note the keyboard in Suzuki is not configured to input holiday data of the center system and/or the customer system. Suzuki makes clear that the setting of holiday data is performed automatically by a CPU 42 and is not based on any input into the keyboard. Suzuki specifically discloses at column 7, lines 39-40 that a standard collection date can be set by a keyboard 43, but that “if it is determined by the CPU 42 that the set date falls on a holiday, in this embodiment, the set date is *automatically changed* to an immediately preceding date *by the CPU 42* which also serves as a set-date automatically changing means for changing a set-date to a date other than the holiday”.<sup>1</sup>

From such disclosure in Suzuki it is clear that the only input provided in Suzuki is to set a standard collection date and that the setting of a holiday date is performed automatically by the CPU, and is not performed based on any input of holiday data of a center system and/or a customer system.

The system of the claimed invention allows a human operator to input holiday data, for example if a system is being shut down for maintenance or for a standard or non-standard holiday, which is clearly not possible in the device of Suzuki.

Moreover, as noted above, in independent claim 1 the early message date is sent to the data communication device “via the *telephone network*” (emphasis added). That feature is believed to also distinguish over Suzuki. As can be understood from Figures 13 and 14 of Suzuki, a host computer sends a request for information to a terminal through a relay device, so that the requested information from the terminal is received at the host computer.

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<sup>1</sup> Suzuki at column 7, lines 45-50 (emphasis added).

In contrast to that disclosure in Suzuki, in independent claim 1 the early message date is sent via the *telephone network*, and further in claim 1 that early message date can be sent by the data communication device itself. Such features clearly distinguish over Suzuki.

In such ways, amended independent claim 1 is believed to clearly distinguish over the teachings in Suzuki.

Moreover, applicants note that each of independent claims 10, 15, 16, and 20 is amended by the present response to recite further features, and each of those claims, and the claims dependent therefrom, are also believed to be allowable.

More particularly, independent claim 10 recites corresponding features as in independent claim 1 noted above, and thus is also believed to be allowable. Further, independent claims 15, 16, and 20 now recite that an early message date is calculated “based on a holiday data input by the corresponding one of the image forming devices”, which is believed to also distinguish over the applied art of Suzuki for similar reasons as discussed above. Independent claims 15, 16, and 20 also recite transmitting the early message date “via the telephone network” similarly as in independent claim 1 noted above.

In such ways, applicants respectfully submit that each of amended independent claims 1, 10, 15, 16, and 20, and the claims dependent therefrom, distinguish over the applied art to Suzuki.

Further, applicants submit that no teachings in Hirota overcome the above-noted deficiencies in Suzuki.

In such ways, applicants respectfully submit that each of the currently pending claims is allowable over the cited art.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

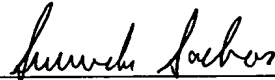
Respectfully submitted,

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